

# THINGS THEATRICAL FOR THE PLAYGOER



Robert Edeson in  
"The Woman in Room 13."



Caroline Walker  
at the Capitol.



Georgia Lee  
Hall in  
"A Voice in  
the Dark."

## As We Were Saying—

By Heywood Brown

MISS ETHEL BARRYMORE, who has acted in plays in which she had to cry and in plays in which she had to laugh and in plays in which she was required to do both, is the authority for the statement that the lighter emotions put much the greater strain on the constitution. It is no great effort for a good actress to tear her heart out night after night once she has fashioned the performance to her liking. Her technical equipment will carry her through, but with scenes of unflagging gaiety the actress must make a definite contribution out of her own store of high spirits. Technique is not enough. She must actually key herself up to a merry mood. All of which may serve to explain the almost universal good health, good temper and longevity of emotional actresses.

Of course, there is a tradition that an actor or an actress creates a character by "losing himself in the part" as he is often fond of telling the man who comes to interview him. Miss Barrymore is frankly skeptical whether any considerable number of players use this method and if they do she is equally inclined to question its effectiveness.

"Lose yourself in a part?" said Miss Barrymore, scornfully. "Why, where do you go when you do that?"

Miss Barrymore is of the opinion that the actor who actually loses grip on himself in playing a part must necessarily sacrifice much of his judgment in playing. After all, the actor must be enough outside the part he is playing to calculate nicely just how he shall convey the effect which he is trying to create. Miss Barrymore does not deny that the cries real tears upon stage occasion, but she is equally positive that they are not actual tears of sorrow. Still, she finds that difficult to explain to her children, one of whom was much distressed by his mother's emotion in a recent play.

"But these aren't real tears," said Miss Barrymore, to the play. "Then, why is your face wet?" he asked, and was not to be satisfied.

Accordingly, the children have not yet been taken to see "Déclassée." It might disturb them to see their mother die in the last act, even though she does it with so ingratiating an air of bravado.

Miss Barrymore feels sure that one of the most valuable factors in her equipment for the stage is the family tradition which lies behind her. Curiously enough, the family name was no more a name to a job in the theater. Miss Barrymore played her first role at the age of fourteen, but after that came a weary time, when for five years she was trapped from one agency to another and lost her money and her stock company managers without success. Once a definite opportunity came she made rapid progress.

But of the word "Barrymore" did not immediately open every stage door to her. Miss Barrymore feels that in the business of acting certain things have come to her just a little more easily than they would if her grandmothers had not been in the theater for seventy years, and if there were not generations and generations of Barrymores behind her. Miss Barrymore will tell you, is instinctively an ear for the spoken line. Just as there is an ear for music so there is an ear for the spoken line. It may be a gift, but it is not to be acquired. One who has a gift to give to some one else, it is more likely to be the result of the long and careful training of those who have gone before. You possess an ear for the spoken line you know when it is said and when it is said wrongly. To be sure, there are other approaches to the correct delivery. Naturally, there are times when good, sound common sense will dictate the manner in which a line is to be spoken. But there are in such problems which are to be solved by intelligent reading may fail to have precisely the correct effect on the audience. And it is in such cases that the decision must be left to the ear, particularly if that ear has a sensitive wisdom of a long line of players who have struggled with the problem of expressing emotion in the terms which

will bring it most surely to the perception of audiences.

Stage manners and methods change at least once in a generation, but even after these changes there remains a certain common quality in every audience, and it is because of this eternal sameness in audiences that the actor with a tradition behind him keeps up a current of understanding between stage and pit which has never been broken—a current which existed in fact before there was either pit or stage.

In some respects the definite stamp of personality which is on every Barrymore proved a handicap. In the early days of Miss Barrymore's career she was constantly meeting the complaint of critics that in every part she was herself. This worried her a good deal until she played a season with Henry Irving, who told her not to worry about trying, who told her not to worry about trying, who told her not to worry about trying. "They say it about me, too," said Sir Henry, and after that Miss Barrymore ceased worrying.

There have been various combinations of two Barrymores in a play, but so far as we know, the American theater has yet to see John, Lionel and Ethel on the stage together. It is possible that this may be achieved some time or other, for all three have a notion that at some dim, distant date they may combine to play "Macbeth." This is one of the roles which Miss Barrymore has always longed to play, and she thinks that there is no reason why such a venture should not be a financial success, since "Macbeth" has in it, as well as its tragic significance, real elements of melodrama as it was before we made it a tragedy.

Of all the plays in which she has appeared she is not sure that "Déclassée," her present venture, is not her favorite, although she hesitates to say that, as she has always had a soft spot in her heart for "Midnight." But for the discovery of "Déclassée" Miss Barrymore might have ventured into Shakespeare. This season, the discovery of Miss Akin's play was made by her manager, Alfred Hayman. It was also Mr. Hayman who hit upon the very fortunate stroke of bringing Claude King over to play the role of Solomon. The play was accepted on the basis of the first two acts, which proved attractive enough to both manager and actress to satisfy them that they had just the sort of play they wanted for Miss Barrymore.

Owing to the numerous conflicts in first nights we did not have the opportunity to see "Boys Will Be Boys" at the Belmont Theatre until last week. Accordingly, we missed one of the most delightful performances in town. Harry Beresford as Peep O'Day gives a performance only a shade below that of Frank Bacon in "Lightnin'." It is perhaps not quite so finished a piece of acting, but it is extraordinarily effective in bringing to the theater a quality of real gentleness which never goes over the line into labored sentimentality. Like Beresford, it seems to us that Charles O'Brien Kennedy has been unusually successful in translating the kindly and human quality of Cobb into the medium of the theater. In this respect he has succeeded where several other playwrights have failed. The story has its slack moments in the second act, but the first act is good and the second scene in the third act continuously diverting. There is some staunch support behind Beresford. William St. James is an excellent Judge Priest and Euse Mary King does skillful work in the part of the villainess. All in all, "Boys Will Be Boys" seems to us to belong in the not overlong list of New York theatrical attractions which are worth their salt.

When he was interviewed upon first arriving in America Lord Dunsany was quoted as believing that "The Queen's Enemies" was probably his best acting work in the part of the villainess. All last week he had an opportunity of seeing it acted for the first time and also of having his first view of "A Night at an Inn." Seemingly the chance to see these two plays put on caused him to reverse his previous opinion, for in a little curtain speech he paid scant attention to "Queen's Enemies" and was frank in expressing his pleasure at the vivid acting qualities in the other piece. The Neighborhood Players by the way



BRIGGS '19

Beginning next Sunday an  
Illustration by Briggs will  
be a regular feature of the  
Sunday Dramatic Section  
of the Tribune

**Hugh J. Ward, Honored  
By Belgian Monarch,  
Was American Actor**

News that Hugh J. Ward has been honored in distant Australia by King Albert, of Belgium, has aroused the interest of the theatrical clubs of New York, the majority of which include the "Queen's Enemies" was probably his best acting work in the part of the villainess. All last week he had an opportunity of seeing it acted for the first time and also of having his first view of "A Night at an Inn." Seemingly the chance to see these two plays put on caused him to reverse his previous opinion, for in a little curtain speech he paid scant attention to "Queen's Enemies" and was frank in expressing his pleasure at the vivid acting qualities in the other piece. The Neighborhood Players by the way

theatrical producers of Australia and one of the managing directors of J. C. Williamson, Ltd., which controls ten big theaters in Australia and New Zealand and is at present engaged in presenting grand opera, light opera, pantomime, drama and farce comedy simultaneously, in addition to operating motion picture houses. Work on the erection of a picture palace, similar in type to the new Capitol in New York and seating nearly 5,000 people, was recently announced by Mr. Ward as the latest activity of his company in Melbourne.

Ward is a frequent American visitor and still retains large interests in his native country, among them financial interests in baseball. He is a large stockholder in the Boston Red Sox. He is an American and started his career as an actor, acquiring the fundamentals of the profession with stock companies in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Later he took up dancing and achieved wide popularity in that field. He was selected to play Fred Stone's role in "The Wizard of Oz," when that big musical success was transplanted to the London stage. It was Ward's success in that role that took him to Australia and laid the foundation for his fortune. Upon the return of the King of the Belgians to his capital Mr. Ward will proceed to Brussels for the ceremony in which the personal decoration is bestowed by the hand of the monarch.

While the Capitol is to be primarily the de luxe home of the moving picture, the film entertainment is only a small part of the daily program prepared by Edward J. Bowes and Ned Wayburn, production director.

The film feature for this week is Douglas Fairbanks in "His Majesty the American," his first release under the auspices of "The Big Four." A Universal picture called "The Eternal Triangle" also is on the film program. Arthur Pryor's band of 70 pieces starts in the regular program. For the vaudeville portion, Wayburn presents his "demi-tasse" revue with a chorus of 50 girls, all of whom keep up the well-known Wayburn standard as exemplified at the "Follies" and other similar productions.

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## Capitol Theatre Makes Bow to New York Public

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